

Police visit 79 addresses during national County Lines intensification week

Police Scotland officers took proactive action to identify and safeguard vulnerable people exploited by drug dealers – during the latest national County Lines intensification week.

Assistant Chief Constable Andy Freeburn said: “Protecting those vulnerable people in our communities, particularly children who are all too often coerced, groomed and threatened by County Lines drug dealers remains a priority for Police Scotland officers.

“We work tirelessly in partnership with a wide range of organisations, including the members of Scotland’s Serious Organised Crime Taskforce, to target individuals who snare them and force them to carry out crimes on their behalf.”

During the UK-wide initiative – co-ordinated by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) – officers in Scotland safeguarded 66 vulnerable people and engaged with a further 3210. They visited 79 addresses – 25 were believed to be used by drug dealers as a cuckooing house. Sixty men and twenty-one women were arrested and 54 evidential search warrants were executed.

More than £180,000 of heroin, £120,000 of crack cocaine and

£22,000 of cocaine were seized. Cannabis, herbal cannabis and cannabis edibles, as well as synthetic opioids, ketamine, mixing agents and more than £60,000 in cash were recovered.

A machete, an axe, four lock knives, two bottles of corrosive substance and a can of pepper spray were recovered. An electric bike, an electric scooter, four vehicles and 87 mobile phones were also seized.

County Lines drug dealers from larger cities expand their criminal activity into smaller communities to exploit young and vulnerable people to sell drugs, carry cash and weapons – bringing violence, coercion and abuse. They can also take over someone's house, known as cuckooing.

Justice Secretary Angela Constance said: "I welcome the very positive results achieved by Police Scotland to dismantle county lines operations which are run by ruthless criminals whose only motivation is to make money by cruelly exploiting some of the most vulnerable in society.

"Partners on Scotland's Serious Organised Crime Taskforce are fully committed to using all means at their disposal to identify and support those at risk and ensure that those responsible are held to account."

ACC Freeburn added: "The positive results during the intensification week are an example of our continuing work in support of national initiatives aimed at frustrating and disrupting the activities of those who involved in County Lines drugs dealing.

"Organised criminals don't care about anyone other than themselves and they only care about power and money. They travel to exploit vulnerable people in our communities and their criminality is simply not welcome in Scotland and will not be tolerated."

"Anyone who has concerns about County Lines or information

about who may be involved in this insidious criminal activity should get in touch with Police Scotland or anonymously to the independent charity Crimestoppers.”